

CALISTHENIC EXERCISES,

BY

MISS MARIAN MASON.

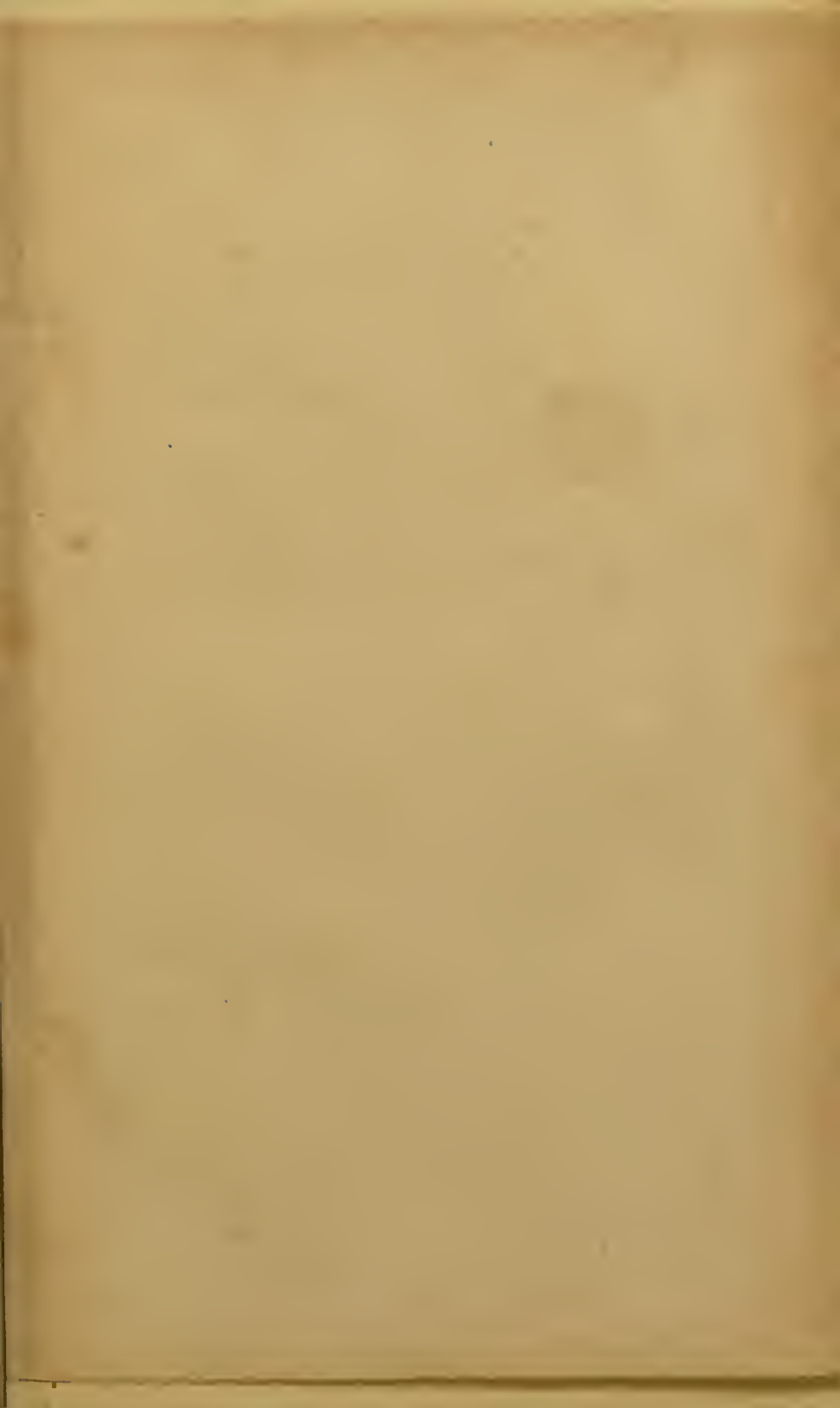
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Calisthenic Exercises.

ON
THE UTILITY OF EXERCISE;
OR
A FEW OBSERVATIONS
ON THE ADVANTAGES TO BE DERIVED FROM ITS
SALUTARY EFFECTS, BY MEANS OF
CALISTHENIC EXERCISES,

AS APPROVED OF BY SOME OF THE MOST EMINENT GENTLEMEN
OF THE FACULTY IN LONDON.

BY MISS MARIAN MASON,
OF No. 3, GEORGE STREET, HANOVER SQUARE,
FORMERLY A PUPIL TO CAPTAIN CLIAS,
And the only Lady in England purposely taught by him,
in order to instruct Ladies in that essential Branch of
Physical Education.

HUMBLY DEDICATED
TO THE LADIES OF GREAT BRITAIN.

LONDON:
T. CLERC SMITH, 36, ST. JAMES'S STREET.
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P R E F A C E.

ALTHOUGH much has already been said concerning the advantages of exercise communicated to the human frame by means of *Calisthenic Exercises*, their not being put in practice so generally as the case requires among females of the higher class, and many

personal deformities which might be easily remedied by them, remaining still unattended to, it is much to be regretted that the means which are necessary to be adopted for the prevention or cure of such structural defects should be so long deferred. It is owing to the high opinion that the most enlightened medical gentlemen in London have of the salutary effects of the *Calisthenic Exercises* upon females of a weak constitution, and in all cases of nervous debility, want of tone in the muscular fibres, preternatural weakness of the limbs, and

other similar cases liable to affect their constitution, that they think themselves perfectly justified in recommending the practice of them ; as their principal aim is the preservation of health, and the tendency that they have to invigorate it. Their considering them also most beneficial in almost every case of debility of the organs in general, or impediment in the growth of some of the limbs of the human body, whose thriving is retarded by some hidden causes, they prescribe them likewise successfully, with the view of not only correcting and stopping the progress of

those disorders, so hurtful to the tender frame, but with the conviction, that, being persevered in, they can never fail to perform a cure, for which it would be in vain to attempt other remedies.

It is, therefore, in consequence of the extraordinary and almost incredible improvement in the organization of females, who had previously suffered from complaints of the above-mentioned kind, and the daily experience obtained by the writer of these pages, ever since she has been engaged in teaching those exercises, that she presumes to offer

this little Work for the perusal of those, whose delicate state of health may require the use of *Calisthenics*, which, to borrow the expression of Dr. Passow, are an invaluable present to mankind.

The writer, therefore, actuated by the wish of promulgating her system of female exercises, in such a manner that it may become more general, and its usefulness still better appreciated, intends, for that purpose, to exemplify, in an early future Publication, all the various motions which the

limbs are capable of executing, commencing by the elementary movements, which are of the most simple nature, and which contribute at the same time to render the carriage easy and graceful, by a well-directed management of the superior extremities. The single movements, which are afterwards to be put in practice, will be found indispensably necessary to impart an agreeable air and easy manner, which are so much admired in young ladies of the higher class. Lastly, the complicated movements, which will be explained and illustrated with plates and

figures in the course of the intended Publication, will leave no doubt of their being calculated to develop the whole frame, to increase its strength, and rectify whatever tendency it may have to deformity.



ON THE UTILITY
OF
EXERCISE.

As it is principally owing to inactivity, or want of a proper degree of exercise, that ladies in general become valetudinary ; and as their situation in life precludes them from the laborious exercise which generally causes women of the lower class to enjoy a better state of health than they do themselves,

Calisthenics, those gentle and pleasureable exercises, have been purposely introduced by the author, to supply the want of exertion, other females are obliged to use, to earn their bread by labour, and to prevent, at the same time, the numberless disorders arising from a state of inaction.

It is the opinion of medical men, and indeed that of every person acquainted with the method of preserving health, that exercise is almost the only cure known for obstructions in the glands: and although many may think that it does not always succeed as a remedy, still there cannot exist the slightest

doubt but it would seldom fail, were it used in due time ; that is to say, when there is any reason to suppose that ill-health, and a state of continual languor, are occasioned by the want of it.

An eminent medical gentleman in London asserts, that among those who take sufficient exercise, glandular diseases are very little known, whereas the indolent and inactive are seldom free from them : he adds, that no remedy can be more conducive to prevent or remedy them, than a regular and well-managed course of *Calisthenic Exercises*, by means of which the perspiration is duly carried on ; for if the fluid

which ought to be thrown off by perspiration is retained in the body, it vitiates the humours, and occasions an endless train of maladies, which, soon or late, cannot fail to become fatal. The medical gentleman alluded to, farther asserts, that exercise procured by *Calisthenics* has a great tendency to brace and strengthen the nerves, and completely prevent all disorders which usually proceed from a relaxed state of those organs. True it is, that we seldom hear the active or laborious complain of nervous diseases; these are reserved for the children of ease and affluence. Several instances have occurred of persons having been en-

tirely cured of these disorders, by being reduced from a state of opulence, to labour for their daily bread. This plainly points out the sources from whence nervous diseases flow, and the means by which they may be effectually prevented.

A late author,* in his excellent Treatise on Health, says, that weak valetudinary females ought to make exercise a part of their religion. We would recommend this, not only to the weak and valetudinary, but to all whose pursuits do not oblige them to take sufficient exercise; as sedentary ladies, or

* Cheyne.

those who apply themselves much to study. Such ought to use exercise as regularly as they take food; particularly as it may generally be done without any interruption to employment, or loss of time.

The same author also remarks, that inactive females are incessantly complaining of pains of the stomach, indigestion, &c. These complaints, which pave the way to many others of a still more alarming nature, are not to be removed by medicines: they can only be cured by exercise; and that, communicated to the frame by means of the elementary exercises, the *Triangle* and

the *Cane*, cannot be too strongly recommended. Either one or the other may be used at pleasure; it is not necessary to adhere strictly to one in preference to the other : the best way is to take them by turns, and to use that longest, which is most suitable to the strength and constitution of those whose state of health requires it. Those kinds of exercise, which give action to most of the bodily organs, should always be preferred, and continued till they almost border on fatigue.

It is much to be regretted, that active diversions are now so little practised by ladies. A celebrated writer has justly

observed, that diversions make people take more exercise than they otherwise would do, and are of the greatest service to such as are not under the necessity of labouring for their subsistence.

As active diversions lose ground, those of a sedentary kind seem to prevail. Sedentary diversions are of no other use but to consume time. Instead of relaxing the mind, they often require more thought, than either study or any other avocation. Those sorts of pastimes may therefore be deemed more productive of pernicious, than salutary effects. Consequently, every thing that

induces people to sit still, unless it be some necessary employment, ought by all means to be avoided.

Another no less eminent practitioner, who had occasion lately to observe the effects produced by those exercises, has remarked, that they have not only the power of exercising the limbs most effectually, but also that of strengthening the lungs, and giving firmness, agility, and grace, to the whole frame.

Notwithstanding that exercise, and particularly that taken by means of the instruments alluded to, be at all times refreshing, and continually tends to pro-

mote the various functions which the body has to perform, it must be observed, however, says a great physiologist, that it should be proportioned to the powers of the individual; for not only is nothing gained by over-exertion, but subsequent rest, does not recruit, and sleep often cannot be obtained. Exercise, he adds, ought only to be continued, until the person who uses it feels an agreeable lassitude. If it be carried farther, it weakens, instead of strengthening the body, and filling the lungs with heated blood, it may be productive of injurious consequences. Hence, however useful, and even necessary, exercise is, it ought never to be

carried to excess. Many interesting females have been cut off, by carrying to excess the amusement of dancing, from the fatigue with which it is accompanied.

Impressed with these ideas, the celebrated Darwin contends that the necessity of much exercise, has *perhaps*, been more insisted upon by certain physicians than nature seems to demand. He says, numbers of people in our market towns, of ladies in particular, with small fortunes, live to old age, in health, with very little exercise of body, and without much activity of mind. Be it as it may, this doctrine

is strongly objected to by Dr. Beddoes, notwithstanding the respect he so justly entertains for the medical philosopher by whom it was brought forward. That many dowagers live long in provincial towns, he admits; but whether they live *in health* is the question. These ladies, in general, live in a constant valetudinary state; dissolved by heat, pinched by cold; harassed by sleeplessness on going to bed, unrefreshed by their tardy morning nap; faint when empty, oppressed when full; and, in the intermediate time, suffering under some of the other plagues of indisposition. Their nerves, also, commonly require drams, in the shape of

drugs, to render their existence tolerable.

The aim of the writer of these pages being to represent the good effects of exercise to those who may peruse them, according to her own judgment and experience, thinks proper to bring forward the different opinions of the men of letters, who, having treated on the subject, consider it either in a favourable light, or otherwise; for that reason, as many delicate persons, to whom exercise is recommended as a curative means, are apt to use it to excess, without choosing the kind best calculated to produce the desired effect. The

disadvantages of excess of exercise are thus summed up by an intelligent physician : It renders the circulation unequal and tumultuous ; weakens the nervous system, and the springs of life ; exhausts muscular strength ; disturbs and lessens insensible perspiration ; and finally, wastes the body, by losing many of the nutritious parts of the solids and fluids. But the reverse will be the case, when a gentle and slow exercise, so conducive to health, is taken through the medium of either the *triangle* or the *cane* ; which, instead of producing the dangerous effects above-mentioned, will be found entirely innocent, and, at the same time, fulfil the

ends proposed for the recovery of weak and valetudinary persons, or of those labouring under any visible tendency to corporeal deformities.

It will be found, that, in regard to young females, from early infancy to the age of twenty, abundant exercise, without being too exhausting, is essential to promote the extension of the solids, and the growth of the body. As to exercise in young females, it is necessary to distinguish the strong from the feeble, and not to measure them by the same standard: the former may be taught all kinds and degrees of exercises on the *triangle*, the latter must be

taught more cautiously with respect to both ; and as the instrument, by means of which those exercises are performed, allows both the teacher and the pupil to augment or diminish the muscular powers, it will at once be found the best adapted to fulfil the end in view. Young pupils of a weak constitution and slender make, should never be permitted to have their limbs extended or bent, at the commencement, beyond their size, their ability, or their strength, as such exertions would prove injurious ; but by being gradually and slowly put in use, and at stated intervals, great benefit is to be expected from them. Those, on the contrary,

who are more advanced in life, and in whom the muscles have the appearance of being strong, require to be taught more active exercises, in order to support the powers of the constitution, and to ward off any tendency to the deviation of the vertebral column. When pupils have commenced a course of exercises, which we call *Calisthenic*, they ought not to allow a day to pass without a degree of some other exercise accommodated to their strength ; for it is a well-known fact, that few persons, more especially those who are delicate, can long enjoy firm health under a habit of indolence, as it contributes to increase that languor of the animal,

vital, and natural functions, which constitutes a very considerable part of every disorder.

Exercise, when transmitted to the human body by the *Calisthenics*, or the use of the Triangle, is attended with obvious advantages: first, from the agreeable occupation it furnishes, and the vacant time which it fills up; and as it secures a sound repose at night, as it sends nourishment into the parts more forcibly, as it makes the substance of the body more solid and compact, and less apt to be consumed and depredated by the spirits, it can never be too much recommended, as the most

sure preservative against all the slight indispositions to which the constitution of many young females is exposed.

Independently of the salutary effects arising from the kind of exercise just mentioned, much benefit may also be derived from dancing. The ancients celebrated much the exercise of dancing. They said it was invented by the goddess Rhea; and it has been approved of by the greatest men of all ages. Even Socrates was not only a professed admirer of this exercise in others, but learned it himself, when he was an old man; and Cowley's observation seems to be well founded, that

so much of dancing, at least, as belongs to the behaviour and proper carriage of the body, is extraordinarily useful, if not absolutely necessary.

In the middle ages, dancing was reckoned among the most elegant accomplishments necessary to be acquired by ladies ; and in the Romances of those days, the character of a heroine was incomplete, unless she danced excellently.

Locke himself, in his Treatise on Education, says, that children ought to be taught to dance as soon as they are capable of learning it. Nothing, he observes, contributes so much to a be-

coming confidence and behaviour, or raises them sooner to the conversation of those above their age. For though dancing consists merely in outward gracefulness of motion, yet it gives children superior thoughts, and a proper carriage.

On the whole, exercise derived from either the triangle, the cane, or dancing, is most essential for youth ; and a foundation should then be laid for acquiring that taste for action which must preserve and improve our bodily and mental powers at any future period of life ; for, by the various exertions of the muscles of the limbs, and of the

trunk of the body, and the alternate compression and relaxation of the blood-vessels and secretory organs, the circulation is promoted, the perspiration increased, the relaxed fibres strengthened, and the whole nervous system invigorated.*

Among the general or miscellaneous rules regarding exercise, the following will perhaps be found deserving of particular attention. Fulgentius, who has written much on this important subject, expresses himself nearly as follows :—

* Adair's Medical Cautions.

1. Bodily exercise should at least be taken once a-day, and before a meal, so as to excite the natural heat or glow. He adds, that when it is thus managed, it contributes to the preservation of health, it invigorates our faculties, it expels through the pores all superfluous humours, and may well be called the duty of the young, and the delight of the aged.

2. The effect of any exercise should be as general as possible, and not confined to any particular limb or part of the body. Those of the *triangle* and the *cane*, therefore, which give action

to the greatest number of the bodily organs, are to be preferred.

3. The larger and the drier the apartments, and the more varied the air; where this species of exercise is taken, the more beneficial it is to those who have recourse to it.

4. On commencing these exercises, it must be observed that the pupil should begin with the more gentle, and then proceed to the more active; and, as sudden transitions are always wrong, she ought to follow the same rule when they are given up.

5. In these exercises attention must be paid, when it is practicable, to the preserving a proper carriage, or holding the body erect ; and also to such a position of all the parts of the body, that none may be exposed to injury.

6. Pupils ought not to be irregular or desultory in those exercises when they practise them, flying from one extreme to another. Hence, pupils of a sedentary habit should commence the use of them with much caution, lest the sudden stimulus given to the constitution by violent exertions should throw the whole frame into disorder ; but when they are daily pursued with mo-

deration and steadiness, they cannot possibly be injurious, but quite the reverse.

In addition to this, it becomes necessary to observe, that muscular motion is most agreeable and healthful, when the stomach is neither too empty nor too much distended. Nothing can be more injudicious, than to sit down to a substantial dinner or supper, immediately after a fatiguing walk, ride, or other active exercise. When the blood is heated, and the body in a state of perspiration, to eat a quantity of solid food can never be wholesome. Every person, therefore, should rest for

some time after having gone through the exercises which are the subject of these pages, before sitting down either to dinner or supper. For the same reason, exercise is likewise hurtful immediately after meals, as it obstructs digestion, by propelling those fluids to the surface of the body, which are designed for the stomach, to promote the solution of the food, and thus to suspend the process of digestion.

A matter no less important in regard to health, is carefully to avoid drinking cold liquors, either during or after active or great exercise; for the principal heat of the body being brought to the

surface, the inward parts feel too sensibly the chill of any cold application suddenly brought in contact with them. By drinking liquids blood-warm, they would quench thirst better, and would do no injury.*

The following observation in regard to clothing, being connected with exercise, the writer thinks herself justified in making it. Pupils, whilst engaged in these exercises, should pay much attention to ease and freedom in their manner of dressing, particularly with respect to the neck and joints, that the

* Lynch's Guide to Health.

circulation may not be confined to any one part, but be permitted to move on everywhere without restraint.

Having thus, in this small Work, attempted to place in a striking light the numerous advantages that are to be derived from the proper use of the *Calisthenics*, which having been erroneously considered by some persons unacquainted with the manner in which they act upon the frame, as injurious to the form, a very different opinion has been subsequently formed, since their having been illustrated by the author in two public exhibitions last year, at the Argyll Rooms, in the presence of a num-

ber of the nobility, ladies of the first rank, and several of the most eminent gentlemen of the faculty; who, after having expressed their most decided approbation of their efficacy, in preventing and removing those structural deformities above-mentioned, have since recommended to the tuition of the author several pupils of a weak constitution, and in whom a tendency to deformity was but too visible. This she conceives to be a sufficient proof of the justice of her remarks, and which she trusts will remove the prejudices that had been previously entertained by a few persons who had not had any opportunity of witnessing the effects of those

highly useful and health-promoting exercises, which the author continues to teach with all the success that their nature may entitle her to expect.

As the writer is the *only female teacher* who has purposely been instructed in them by Captain Clias, whose system has obtained the general public sanction, and as she has ever since been continually engaged in teaching them after her own method, she can with confidence recommend them to public notice; assured, that if ladies in general could but be persuaded of the material benefits resulting from them, not only for the preservation of

health, but (when taken early) for the effectual cure of many bodily complaints, they would without hesitation give them a fair trial, and, above all, persevere in them.

THE END.

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